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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEBAAA/HQ DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC
RUEAEPA/HQ EPA WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 1345
RUEHVV/ISLAMIC CONFERENCE COLLECTIVE
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 1288
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1375
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SUBJECT: TAJIKISTAN HUMANITARIAN DEMINING: REQUEST FOR PM SUPPORT

REF: HARRIS - ARMBRUSTER E-MAILS 2/13/2006

11. Post appreciates PM/WRA information (reftel) and strongly supports further engagement on demining in Tajikistan, including a Policy Assessment Visit and funding for the Tajik Mine Action Committee through the United Nations Development Program.

MINES ALONG THE AFGHAN BORDER

12. Russia laid antipersonnel mines inside Tajikistan with the consent of the Tajik government in accordance with a 1993 military cooperation agreement. The Russians laid the mines prior to October 2000 on the Tajik side of the Pyanzh River to protect Tajikistan from invasion by the Taliban. Since then, the rationale for landmines was expanded to include blocking illegal drug trafficking. Russia removed all border guard troops in 2005, though some advisors remain, but did not remove the mines from the Afghan border.

AND THE UZBEK BORDER

13. While the mines along the Afghan border were laid with Tajik government acquiescence, Tajikistan has protested the use of antipersonnel mines by Uzbekistan, allegedly inside Tajik territory. Uzbekistan reportedly sowed mines in Tajikistan from 2000 until at least June 2001. The official justification was to protect Uzbekistan from attack by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and to prevent drugs and arms smugglers from entering the country. However, the border with Uzbekistan is contested and Tajikistan claims mines are laid up to 500 meters inside of Tajik territory. Media reports claim that up to 70% of the Tajik-Uzbek border is mined and there are regular reports of civilians and livestock injured or killed in these regions.

AND CENTRAL TAJIKISTAN

14. Mines and unexploded ordinance left over from the Tajik

Civil War remains a serious threat inside Tajikistan. Both sides in the Civil War used antipersonnel mines and they remain a hazard in the central part of the country, mainly the Rasht Valley where the Tajik Mine Action Committee has so far focused its efforts.

IMPACT

15. Tajikistan is 93% mountainous, so arable land is scarce and too valuable to waste. Farm families and their livestock continue to be victims of landmines. Hundreds of people in Gorno-Badakshan, Sugdh, and Khatlon region have been killed or wounded by landmines.

REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE

16. There are two requests for assistance outstanding with the Embassy. First, is an equipment list from the Ministry of Defense for demining activities. Second, is the request from the Tajik Mine Action Committee, a UN-affiliated organization with Tajik Government representation, for \$3.2 million to support demining activities for 2006. (Both requests forwarded to PM by e-mail 2/14.) Tajik Mine Action has not received donations for 2006 and staff have not received salaries for the past two months. Tajik Mine Action provides mine clearing (in the spring through early fall due to snowfall), assistance to survivors, education, advocacy, and planning, monitoring and coordination. Tajik Mine Action is interested in K9's and K9 support and shelters, demining machines, and money for ongoing operations. The Embassy has provided funds to Tajik Mine Action for minefield warning signs, and the State Department has provided funds to the OSCE for demining activities. Post strongly supports a Policy Assessment Visit to better determine the needs and priorities for U.S. assistance.

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EMBASSY ENDORSEMENT OF DEMINING ACTIVITIES

17. Addressing the minefields with Afghanistan and Uzbekistan would increase regional dialogue, enhance Tajikistan's agricultural output, and provide much-needed humanitarian assistance. Demining in Tajikistan is consistent with the Embassy Mission Program Plan to help secure Tajikistan's border and supports the State Department's Humanitarian Mine Action Strategic Plan. Demining would protect victims of conflict, restore access to land, develop Tajik national capacity, demonstrate support for an ally in the War on Terror, promote conflict resolution, and improve global humanitarian mine action response. Specifically, funding demining in Tajikistan will enable the Republic of Tajikistan to expedite the process of clearing the over 250,000 square meters of mined territory.

18. Requests for donor assistance from the government of Tajikistan and Tajik Mine Action Committee sent by e-mail to PM/WRA.

19. Tajikistan acceded to the Ottawa Convention on April 30, 2003 and is a signatory to the Amended Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

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